

HOW TO... Make a mask

If you need a mask for a fancy dress event, why not make your own? Adam Banks explains how to use to Photoshop Elements to create the perfect disguise

Masks are always a good party novelty, especially if you create them from faces that are relevant to the occasion. This could be animals, politicians, maybe even your guests – whatever fits the mood. Masks go down just as well on a stag or hen night as they do at a child's birthday party.

There are three stages to making a mask. First, create a template with the eye holes in the right place. Second, fit a photo on to it. Third, print out and finish. Below, you can see how to complete the first two tasks in Photoshop Elements 5. Similar steps can be used in other image editors.

A sheet of A4 paper is large enough to fit an adult face on, so you'll be able to print your image on any inkjet. Before cutting it out, stick the printout to a sheet of thick card. Ideally, use spray mount adhesive, available from art shops. Then carefully cut it out. We suggest you draw the outline using straight lines, which you can cut along using a craft knife and ruler.

To make the mask wearable, you could attach ribbon between holes on each side, level with the eyes. For the best results, reinforce the holes using eyelet pliers, which cost £2.99 from www.maplin.co.uk (code RM54J). Alternatively, mount your mask on a stick. Use a flat stick such as a large lollipop stick; you can get 20 for £2.99 from www.cakescookiesandcraftshop.co.uk. Fix the stick to the back with strong glue or tape, overlapping it enough to hold the mask upright.

1 Run Photoshop Elements 5 and click Edit and Enhance Photos. Go to File, New, Blank File (or press Ctrl-N). In the New box,

choose A4 from the Preset pick list. Make sure the Color Mode is RGB. Next, change the Width to the required distance between the eyeholes. This should be around 65mm for adults and 50mm for kids. Set Background Contents to Transparent. Click OK to make a long, tall page that's transparent, indicated by a checkerboard.

2 Select the Marquee tool, fifth from the top in the toolbox on the left (or press M). In the Options bar at the top, choose the Elliptical shape, set Feather to 0, and tick Anti-alias. From the Mode pick list, choose Fixed Size. Set Width and Height to 1cm. Click anywhere on your page to select a 1cm circle. Choose Fill Selection from the Edit menu, or press Shift-Backspace, to bring up the Fill Layer box. Under Contents, choose Black. Set Normal, 100% and untick Preserve Transparency. Click OK to colour the circle black.

3 People's eyes are about halfway up their heads, so centre the circle. Press Ctrl-X to cut it, Ctrl-0 (zero) to fit the whole page in the window, then Ctrl-V to paste the selection into the middle. Then go to Image, Resize, Canvas Size. Set the Width to 105mm (half A4) and click the middle-left Anchor position. Click OK.

4 You may want to save this template as a Photoshop (.psd) file for future use. Next, go to File, Open (or press Ctrl-O) and load a photograph. Pick the Move tool from the top of the toolbox (or press V), click on the photograph and drag it on your mask template. Press Ctrl-[to send the photograph's layer behind, so you can see your black circle on top. Position the

photograph so that half the head roughly fills the page, with the centre line of the face on the right edge and the eye lined up with the circle. Resize the photograph by dragging a corner handle of its bounding box and, if necessary, rotate it by moving the mouse just off a corner to show a turning arrow symbol, then drag. You may need to zoom out by pressing Ctrl and the minus (-) symbol or enlarge the window to keep the handles visible.

5 Press Return or click the green tick button. Then cut out your half-face. Choose the Lasso tool from the toolbox (or press L), and in the Options bar choose Polygonal Lasso, the last of the three icons on the left. Click at the top of the face on the right edge of the page, release the mouse button, then move along the outline of the face to make a straight line. Click again to draw this line and continue around the face. Don't try to be too precise. Finish at the bottom right and double-click to join the line back to the beginning. It's worth zooming in by pressing Ctrl and the plus (+) symbol to check that the selection goes right to the edge of the page. Press Ctrl-Shift-I (Inverse) followed by Delete to remove the background.

6 Go to Image, Crop; this cuts off the unseen, unused parts of your image. Press Shift-Ctrl-E to merge the layers. Go to Canvas Size as in Step 3, set Width to 210mm and choose the middle left Anchor position. Click OK. Go to Layer, Duplicate Layer and click OK in the dialog box. Finally, press Ctrl-A (Select All), then go to Image, Rotate, Flip Selection Horizontal. 

